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# **The Psychology of Personal Constructs: Humanism without a Self**

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## **Abstract**

In this article, I briefly outline what I see to be the outstanding strengths of the psychology of personal constructs (PCP). These are: its roots in pragmatism and its rejection of dualism, its phenomenological approach to the person and its formulation of core role structure. The concept of core role sees the person as a social product, but once constructed, a centre for choice and agency. I begin with a critique of the ways in which PCP is perceived within orthodox psychology, proposing that its radical approach makes it difficult to classify. I argue that it has humanistic features, but emphasize its rejection of a unitary self. I conclude by looking at the problem of hatred, contending that a PCP formulation helps us re-think this in a more useful way.

## **Introduction.**

Most introductory texts on personality mention personal construct psychology (PCP) respectfully but briefly. The usual story they tell is that it was an early form of cognitivism, one that kept the approach alive during the arid days of behaviourism. Tribute is paid to its founder, George Kelly (1905-67), but the reader is left with the impression that it died with him. The reader is left to assume that contemporary cognitive behavioural therapy is the scientific heir to PCP. Personal constructs were a pre-scientific version of cognitions, and the construct system was an early attempt to make sense of how these cognitive entities affected each other. Yet the elaboration of PCP flourishes in Europe, North America and Australia, all of which have active constructivist organizations and hold bi-annual conferences. Italy is particularly vibrant in its development of PCP (See Gilberto et al., 2012), and I am honoured indeed to have a contribution in the first edition of *Rivista Italiana di Costruttivismo*

Why the paradox? Why is PCP alive and well, while its death is assumed in mainstream psychology? I believe this is because PCP was never properly understood

by those orthodox psychologists who see it as a precursor to cognitivism. It is true that in a weak sense, everyone is a constructivist now. Psychologists now accept that the world as we perceive it is transformed by our construction of it. We never encounter the world in the raw; it is always served up cooked by our construct systems. This much seems congruent with cognitive psychology. But Kelly's psychology was far more radical than this. In his preface to *The Psychology of Personal Constructs* (1955), he warns the reader that the familiar landmarks of psychology are entirely missing:

..the term learning, so honourably embedded in most psychological texts, scarcely appears at all. That is wholly intentional; we are throwing it overboard altogether. There is no *ego*, no *emotion*, no *motivation*, no *reinforcement*, no *drive*, no *unconscious*, no *need*. (Kelly, 1955, p. x)

Kelly's theory uses unusual language, and takes common terms like 'emotion' and gives them entirely new meanings. He set out his theory in an unusual way, proposing a fundamental postulate from which other theoretical propositions flow in a series of eleven corollaries. Here is the fundamental postulate:

A person's processes are psychologically channelized by the way in which he (sic) anticipates events. (1955, p.46)

This is a condensed and gnomic sentence, and we need to unpack it. Let us consider the term 'processes'. Kelly could have said "the way in which a person thinks, feels and behaves". He does not do this, because his theory does not separate cognition, affect and behaviour. Orthodox psychology assumed this separation, which then leads to questions such as which cause which? For behaviourists, cognitions were mere epiphenomena, floating in the wake of behaviour change. Disputes about the causal power of cognition in relation to both behaviour and affect led to social learning theory's ascendancy over behaviourism in the 1970s (Bandura, 1977; Mischel, 1973; Mahoney, 1974). PCP does not find these separations useful. Everything is seen as channelled (and not caused) by the way in which we construe, or anticipate events. And our construing involves what we think of as thought, behaviour and emotion. Emotions are described in terms of the disturbances that ensue when construing

changes; there is no sudden change into the language of physiology as there is in orthodox psychology. We can construe emotions physiologically, but PCP is interested in how our action is *psychologically* channelled. So personal constructs are not like cognitions, in some way behind behaviour and causing it. They are in our action; we construe in action (Radley, 1973, 1977; Butt, 1998).

Construing PCP as a species of humanism rather than cognitivism is I think, more convincing. But it is a very different humanism from that of Rogers (1980), in that there is no self at the centre of the person. In this article, I want to consider this selfless humanism. To do this, it will be necessary to think about the philosophical roots of PCP. Stressing the philosophical roots of the approach might be seen as eccentric in the Anglophonic world (Fransella, 2008), but I think it is important for two reasons. Firstly because Kelly begins his *magnum opus* in 1955 with a statement of his philosophical tradition. Yet the philosophical roots are very often latent and not made explicit (Warren, 1998). Secondly, these traditions have all proved enduring, and each has its adherents in clinical or social psychology. Making explicit these foundations helps us appreciate the links to other approaches, as well as the depth of the psychology of personal constructs.

### **The Psychology of Personal Constructs and its Roots in Pragmatism**

Kelly declined any simple classification for his theory (Kelly, 1969a). As a pragmatist (Thayer, 1982; Warren, 1998; Butt, 2008; Cromwell, 2010), he saw knowledge primarily as a construction rather than a discovery; we make the world rather than find it. We cannot ever know what the world is ‘really like’. Who knows what it looks like to an ant or a dog? We are limited by our senses and our scientific instruments, and use these to order the world in order to anticipate and act in it (see also Maturana and Varela, 1998). Constructions then, are not to be judged in terms of their truth - their representation of things. Instead they are to be judged in terms of their usefulness. Ordering and classification have been invented to help us make sense of what William James famously called the ‘booming buzzing confusion’ around us. So, for a pragmatist, the question is not: is PCP a species of humanism, but does it make sense to think of PCP as a humanism? We remain responsible for our classifications.

Kelly (1955) begins his book with a statement of his philosophical position. This he calls constructive alternativism, and it clearly demonstrates his grounding in pragmatism (Butt, 2008). He distinguishes between events in the world, and constructions of them, or the way they appear to us. In practice, it is impossible to distinguish too sharply between them, because events are always mediated by construing. It is rather like the distinction between the phenomenologists' *noema* and *noesis* (Husserl, 1936/70). As George Mead (1909/1982) had argued, we see the world in terms of what it can do for or to us. A thousand metre precipice is not in itself dangerous. I imagine that it presents no threat to a butterfly or a bird. But we see it as potentially dangerous because of the risk it presents to us. Nevertheless, not all people will see it in the same way. It might present itself somewhat differently to a mountaineer, who might see it as an exciting challenge rather than something to be avoided. Constructive alternativism proposes that all events are open to alternative constructions and the personal constructions adopted by a person are those that have proved useful in negotiating events. The way the world appears to us does not tell us how it appears to others. Of course, there will be culturally common constructions, but a psychotherapist would do well to emphasize the individuality rather than the commonality of construction.

### **PCP and Phenomenology**

As constructivists, we do not have to ask whether PCP is in fact a form of humanism. The question is whether it makes sense to see it thus. And PCP might usefully be construed as a form of humanism, because above all, it emphasizes human agency. Kelly proposed that we think of each person as a scientist, forming and testing his or her theories. The behaviourism of Kelly's time had seen the person as like a white rat or a pigeon, whereas psychoanalysis seen the person as the victim of unconscious forces. Contemporary cognitivism works on the model of person as computer. In terms of pragmatism, these are not incorrect models of reality. They are to be judged by how useful they are. Kelly (1969b) found that the 'man the scientist' model more useful in understanding his clientele. Contemporary constructivists often prefer the person as author model, in which the person is seen as implicitly writing his or her history, and thereby influencing the channels along which future action may run (Chiari and Nuzzo 2010). The basic unit in PCP is the personal construct, a likeness/difference contrast that endows a dimension of meaning on the world (See

Cromwell, 2011). The contrast pole of humanism is mechanism (Butt, 2008), or as Bannister (2003) termed it, a 'clockwork psychology', where behaviour is a response determined either by internal drives or an external environment.

Contributing to a symposium on motivation, Kelly (1969c) made the case that we need not propose forces that energise behaviour. There are no incentives, motives, needs or drives in PCP. Such concepts stem from an assumption of the person as inert, waiting for forces to act upon them. If we assume that motion is an essential property of being, that 'man is a form of motion' (Kelly, 1955, p.48), then we take it for granted that people are always *doing* something, engaged on one project or another. We need an understanding of choice to make sense of the direction of their action, but not of motivation, forces that push or pull them into movement. Motivation underlines a person's passivity; the person merely responds to drives or reinforcement contingencies. They are either pushed or pulled by events. Choice emphasizes agency. The person makes decisions and acts in the world. But from what position does the person make these choices? Who, exactly, does the choosing and charts the course of action?

This is where the notion of self is usually called upon to explain agency. Self is seen as denoting the integration and unity of the person (Stojnov & Proctor, 2012). Rogers' (1980) client centred therapy is based on beliefs about the self and how they are shaped by significant others. He proposed that each person has an actualizing tendency, a natural inclination to grow to achieve his or her full potential. But growth is stunted by the demands of others; our self image and self esteem are affected by the stultifying pressures of society. Counselling and therapy try to remove obstacles, with the therapist offering the unconditional positive regard that allows for unrestricted growth. Rogers' root metaphor is horticultural. Like plants, people naturally grow towards the light. Poor soil and atmospheric traditions pervert the self, resulting in neurotic misery.

Humanistic psychologists such as Rogers often claim that their intellectual roots lie in European existential phenomenology. Rogers frequently cited Buber, and the Wikipedia definition humanistic psychology mentions Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Nietzsche and Heidegger. However, these roots in European existentialism are at best,

superficial and very selective. There is no concept of an essential self at the centre of the person in the philosophy of existence. Both Holland (1970) and Butt (1997) argue that the psychology of personal constructs is a much closer relative of existentialism. We can see that PCP is a form of humanism in that it sees the person as a centre for some choice and agency. But there are very few references to ‘self’ in *The Psychology of Personal Constructs*, and those few are rather dismissive. Take the first mention of ‘self’, for example:

Some writers have considered it advisable to try to distinguish between “external” events and “internal” events. In our system there is no particular need for making this kind of distinction. Nor do we have to distinguish sharply between stimulus and response, between the organism and his environment, or between the self and the not-self. (Kelly, 1955, p.55).

As Stojnov and Proctor (2012) say, Kelly cut across the prevailing behaviourism versus humanism dimension. And I think this quote beautifully sums up the key features of PCP, as well as its roots in the pragmatism of John Dewey, whose philosophy and psychology, Kelly tells us, may be read between the lines of the psychology of personal constructs (Kelly, 1955, p.154).

### **Kelly and Dewey**

Dewey was thoroughly committed to the abolition of those dualisms that he thought of as plaguing psychology. The separations of mind from body, the self from others, and the individual from the environment all led to inadequate analyses of the ways in which we act in the world (Hildebrand, 2008). Dewey saw our present notions of mind and body as dating from Pauline Christianity (Dewey, 1925/1997, p. 204). The splitting of the two is an essential part of Christian doctrine. The body is corrupted and corruptible; the source of sin and all that is wrong with humankind. The spirit is eternal and can be saved when the lusts and passions of the body are mastered. The soul and the spirit have since evolved into minds, and later, selves. Psychology, he thought, was dogged by this dualism, one that had been perpetuated by the fervently Roman Catholic Descartes.

Clearly a scientific psychology cannot accept a ‘no go’ area of an internal mind, and it was in this context at the end of the nineteenth century, that the appeal of a new behaviourism began to take shape. Dewey warned against taking the reflex arc as the unit of analysis in psychology (Dewey, 1896/1982). He recognised the need to escape the notion of a soul, or mind in the body. The adoption of the reflex arc was, he thought, a mistaken attempt to replace this dualism with a crude monism. But the separation of ‘internal’ and ‘external’ processes— the former in the nervous system and the latter in the environment – led us away from the unitary and purposeful nature of action. He takes the example of a child being attracted to a candle flame and subsequently being burned by it. To see this as a succession of stimuli and responses is to fragment and disrupt the flow of action. Action is coordinated and only properly understood in a particular context, not as a series of jerky reflexes that are in some way welded together. What happens in the above example is that the meaning of the flame changes for the child. The whole process does not begin with a sensory stimulus. If it begins anywhere, it is with the *act of looking*. This is an action, an inquiry, and not a matter of a sensation impinging on the body. What develops is not a reflex arc, the welding of a stimulus to a response, but a continuous circuit of sensori-motor action. People are not inert until a stimulus impinges on them. They are, to use Kelly’s phrase, ‘forms of motion’.

Stojnov and Proctor (2012) point out that the crude monism of behaviourism was countered as dualism crept back as the soul morphed into the self. Rogers notion of the self with its sense of potential and drive towards it mirrors the demonology of Descartes. The notion of ‘being oneself’, ‘being true to oneself’ ‘finding oneself’ all rest on the assumption that any action can be matched against some internal truth and declared in some sense invalid. Of course we all sometimes want to disown what we have done, and have all acted in ways which in retrospect, we wish we had not. But is this evidence of not being oneself? Here is Kelly:

A good deal is said these days about being oneself. While it is a little hard for me to understand how one could be anything else, I suppose what is meant is that one should not strive to become anything other than what he is. This strikes me as a very dull way of living; in fact I would be inclined to argue that all of us would be better off if we set out to be something other than what we



are. Well, I'm not sure we would all be *better* off – perhaps it would be more accurate to say that life would be a lot more *interesting*. (Kelly, 1969d, p.157).

Here Kelly is emphasizing his commitment to what he terms elaboration through extension. This is the idea that through personal experiment we can extend our horizons and change what we are. In a series of corollaries to fundamental postulate, he proposed ways in which personal change is both allowed and restricted by our personal construct system. It is important to note that PCP proposes this regulatory feature on change. We are not free to just act in any way we want; there is a sense of accountability to some core process. This is very different from the social constructionist view of a distributed self (Gergen, 1991; Stojnov and Proctor, 2012), where the person's conduct simply varies with the social context.

### **Core structure and core role**

The personal construct system has within it some construing that is particularly important in that it is essential to what Kelly calls the person's 'maintenance processes'. This Kelly calls core construing. He doesn't tell us exactly what he means by maintenance processes, but clearly, the implication is that they are essential for the person. The metaphor of 'core' is interesting. It is tempting to take it as simply meaning 'self', and there are certainly similarities. But it is not a direct translation. When we consider the core of a fruit, we can see that it is indeed essential for its maintenance. The core differs from the peripheral flesh (Kelly also uses the term 'peripheral' as the contrast to core processes). The fruit comprises both core and flesh, but without the seeds at the core, there would be no more apples or pears. Nevertheless, the core is material, and made up from the same material as the flesh. It is not spiritual, occupying a different dimension and obeying different laws. The self is the heir to the spirit and the mind, but the core is part of the material person.

Of particular importance is what Kelly terms 'core role structure'. Kelly took his understanding of role from the pragmatist George Mead (Butt, 2008). We play a role with someone when we act in the light of their construction of our action. So we take account of their different point of view as we shape our action. Core role relationships are those that are particularly central to us. It denotes role relationships that are important to our maintenance processes. So we may not care that our behaviour

appears brisk and cold to a customer, but care very much if it is seen this way by our partner or children. Kelly stresses the importance of these core role relationships in the experience of guilt (Kelly, 1969e). Guilt he suggests, is the awareness of dislodgement from our core role. If important others do not recognise me in my action, I am thrown into doubt as to who I am.

Following Mead, Kelly thought that it is the ability to take another's viewpoint that is a uniquely human achievement. It is what gives us self consciousness. This emphasis on core role relationships makes what we might loosely term the self a social product. It is not, as it is for Rogers, a spiritual core or individual entity that pre-dates our interaction, but fashioned out of those social processes. Like everything else, self is a construction. It is something that is made and not found. It follows that the 'selves' that we produce vary in accordance with the different types of significant others that make up our social world. In traditional societies, people lived in communities in which they had face-to-face contact with a limited number of people. This may still be the case in isolated rural settings, but in the modern world we have a number of quite different important relationships. We live with one set of people, work with another, and join interest groups with different people again. So we might feel quite authentic with family members, colleagues, students, clients and different friends, even though our conduct varies enormously. Saying who is your best friend might present a challenge, as we find that different friends bring out different aspects of us, all of which are important. The fact that we are contemplative with one and boisterous with another might seem quite natural and indeed nourishing to us. We might find no sense of dislodgement and discomfort as we move from one type of role relationship to another. What might seem fragmentary to an observer presents no contradiction to us. Kelly's is a phenomenological approach that understands action from the actor's point of view. The possibilities and restrictions on the flow of action are modulated by the construction of core processes.

### **The community of self**

Miller Mair (1977, 2011) drew on these ideas to propose the notion of self as community rather than a unity. A community is a small collection of individuals that have face-to-face relationships. He suggests it useful to imagine such an articulated series of role relationships within each of us. The metaphor of a community releases

us from the problem of what our 'true' self is, and from wondering what the authentic self is. We do not feel as though we are acting or pretending when we conduct ourselves quite differently in different social contexts. PCP is a phenomenological approach in that it seeks to understand each person by seeing things from their point of view. What seems uncomfortable and out-of-character to one will not appear so to another. An understanding of a sense of social ease will rest on an analysis of the core role relationships comprising each person.

Butt, Burr and Bell (1997) carried out a grid study to investigate the sense of self (for a description of grid method, see Bell, 2003). A structured interview was carried out with a small group of individuals in which each was asked to identify a series of people with whom they had different though important relationships. They were then asked to consider this group in pairs: how do I act differently when I am with Massimo from when I am with Viv? In grid terms, the different self-relationships are termed 'elements' while the differences in action are 'constructs' When the interviewee had exhausted their range of action, they were asked to consider these constructs and elements in a grid form. This allows them to consider how each construct applied to each element on a yes/no basis.

The interviewer and interviewee then examine the completed grid together and search for patterns. One pattern in particular was of interest was what it meant to the interviewees to 'be oneself'. Most of them spontaneously produced such a construct, so one might say "when I'm with my dad I can be myself, but with Tom I watch what I say". The most striking finding of this study was that 'being oneself' for any individual could mean exhibiting a wide range of action. It did not mean acting in a certain way. So one participant conducted himself in very different ways with the two people with whom he felt to be himself. With one he was quite domineering, whereas with the other he tended to defer to that person. 'Being oneself' meant a combination of contradictory traits. What did characterize 'being oneself' was being unself-conscious, not watching oneself all the time and monitoring one's behaviour. It was lending oneself to the joint action (Blumer, 1969; Shotter, 1993; Butt, 2004) that was naturally produced in action. Paradoxically, being oneself involves letting yourself go and allowing yourself to be carried along in the current of joint action.

Mair (2011) shows how the community of self metaphor can help us to understand ourselves. He takes the example of when he was asked to join an interview panel looking for a senior clinical psychologist. He found that he had a wide range of reactions to the candidates when he read their applications. He makes sense of this by separating the different selves he find himself assuming. He named these:

*Anxious*; feeling uneasy at the task in hand

*The Teenage Rebel*; wanting to kick out the clear favourite

*The Reformer*; taking a long view about the role of clinical psychology

*Mr Fair Minded*; wanting to hear all sides of the arguments

*Mr let's Get This Done With*; saying that establishment candidates always win  
– be pragmatic and get the job over with.

The point of the metaphor is that it helped him to both inhabit and detach himself from each player in the community. He installed *Mr Fair Minded* as chair of the group, insisting on balancing the other voices. So through reflection, he was able to take a superordinate position from which he could, as it were, own but not be driven by any particular position.

## **Hatred**

I want now to consider the use of the community metaphor in dealing with feelings of hatred. I choose hatred because it is seen as pivotal in different versions of human nature. Rogers saw humankind as basically good. People were only perverted and evil when they were thrown off course. Society is seen as producing the problem. This was in contrast to the psychoanalytic view developed by Klein (1932), who recycled the doctrine of Original Sin. Here, humankind is seen as a naturally harmful species, civilized and held in check by authority, either external or internalized. We have already noted that Dewey saw Pauline Christianity as emphasizing and propagating this; the body is weak, prone to being overcome with passions. Only with the help of a priest (or psychoanalyst) can the person ward off this evil. Since The Fall, humankind has been excluded from the Garden of Eden. The suffering of hatred, lust and pain are its lot. Hatred holds a special place for psychoanalysis. Klein's paranoid position is not proposed as a developmental stage from which one may emerge. It is a psychic position; forever available and easily accessed. Hatred is the basis of human being.

For the pragmatists, the person is basically neither good nor evil. Kelly mentions the Garden of Eden myth in at least four of his later papers (Maher, 1969), and it is central in *Sin and Psychotherapy* (Kelly, 1969e), arguably a pivotal paper in Kelly's work (Butt, 2008, Cromwell, 2008). In his personal construct analysis, Kelly sees the person as having to make a series of choices: between companionship and loneliness, obedience and adventure, and ultimately between good and evil. Kelly had been raised as a Presbyterian, and perhaps because of this Christian upbringing, he saw good versus evil as a construct dimension that could not be avoided or re-constructed (Butt, 2008). But Kelly does not regret the forsaking of the Garden. For him, humankind is at its best when it chooses through extension and pushes its boundaries. Better to choose a life of inquiry than one of blind obedience. However, we do not know where inquiry and experiment will lead us, and frequently they result in unintended consequences that we regret. Kelly takes us through some of the strategies that people adopt to avoid taking responsibility for their actions and these resemble Sartre's concept of bad faith. Anxiety and guilt are necessarily part of the human condition as we experiment. It is said that Robert Oppenheimer regretted his work that had led to the production of the atomic bomb, and President Truman derided him as the 'cry-baby scientist' (Hamilton, 2011). Perhaps Kelly had such examples in mind, as he wrote *Sin and Psychotherapy* at the height of the Cold War, and, indeed in the year of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

There is surely little doubt that much human evil is the result of hatred. The wishing of harm to others is one corollary of having developed a moral sense. A sense of having been wronged is the source of a variety of reactions in different people, of which hatred is surely one. Midgley (1984) surmises that for anger to be transformed into hatred, the hated other has perhaps to be endowed with an unlikely range of feared and loathed attributes that the hater wishes destroyed. Perhaps this is why other people's hatreds appear so ridiculous: the nazis' belief in the plot of Jewish world domination, the Islaamist's loathing and fearing of all western reforms and the abominations carried out by Protestants and Catholics in mediaeval Europe (and contemporary Northern Ireland). Yet our own hatred seems so natural (mine of nazis, violent Islamists and crusading Christians). We all know what it is to hate, though undoubtedly some hate more than others.

So are our hatreds visited on us? In the Judeo-Christian tradition, re-worked but preserved in psychoanalysis, hatred is seen as fundamental to humanity. The best we can do is to own up to it and control or perhaps channel it. Like hunger or sexual lust, it has the status of a drive. But for the pragmatist, there is no inevitability about it. Pragmatism always questions authority, subjecting it to scrutiny. The common experience of hatred is undeniable, and perhaps it is its prevalence, as well as its destructiveness, that has led to its being thought of as fundamental. In English, we talk of ‘nursing a grudge’, and in the early nineteenth century, William Hazlitt wrote an essay entitled *The Pleasure of Hating* (2004). This covert enjoyment of hatred should make us think about an alternative formulation. It suggests a reluctance to forgive, based on a gratification in staying with hatred.

### **Hatred as Choice**

In this final section, I want to revisit Kelly’s concept of choice, and to argue that it helps us to understand the experience of hatred. Kelly argued that faced with two alternatives, we choose the one that makes most sense to us (Kelly, 1955, 1969c). The elaborative choice, as Kelly terms it, is not necessarily the one that gives most pleasure or satisfaction, but the one that helps us make sense of the world, and supports our world-view. This choice is not usually conscious. We make choices all the time, without reflection and deliberation. Nevertheless, our choices are intentional and not haphazard. I have already said that constructs are not cognitions, but that we construe in action. We find ourselves always moving, always construing, and action in Dewey’s sense incorporates what orthodox psychology divides into behaviour affect and cognition. Kelly emphasizes all this in his discussion of good and evil (Kelly, 1969e). people make what is for them the elaborative choice, and it leads them forward, sometimes into evil.

When we think of choice in everyday life, the image of choosing between two things we want comes to mind. But as Kelly (Kelly 1969c) points out, too often we are in dilemmas, choosing between the lesser of two evils. The neurotic paradox was the original focus of Kelly’s formulation, where the person continually chooses what appear to others as self-defeating strategies. The pattern of action chosen and repeated is not one that leads to enjoyment, though it leads to a world that the person can make

sense of. But of course, this type of choice is by no means restricted to the neurotic. If we consider the experience of hatred as an elaborative choice, what might be the alternative it is preferred to? In an excellent phenomenological study on the psychology of forgiveness, Halling (2008) concludes that resentment and hatred are frequently preferred to the alternative feelings of weakness and helplessness. It is sometimes easier to hate than to cry; it preserves the integrity of a person, holding him or her together. The value of good phenomenological work is that they excite the thrill of recognition in the reader. The findings chime with aspects of your own experience. It helps you reach for something you have hitherto not been able to articulate. I found this reading Halling's work. Of course, it cannot be claimed that every report of hate is explained exactly by this formulation. Wittgenstein's arguments about the labelling of emotion (1972) are convincing; different people will mean slightly different things by a common term. Hatred may well be the elaborative choice in relation to a number of alternatives.

The implications of this re-framing of hatred are what matters. If we think of a person as inhabited by a unitary self or spirit, and as hatred as fundamental to humankind, the voicing or experiencing of hate is evidence of 'what you are really like', or really believe. It lies deep within you and has to be dealt with. To overcome hate might involve channelling it differently, revisiting it, learning to control it, or wrestling with it – perhaps talking yourself out of it using CBT techniques. But it must be met head-on because it is basic to your makeup. If we see the hate-voice as one among many in the community of self, different alternatives open up. Mair did not find it necessary to silence the teenage rebel within him. This voice did not have to be argued with or expelled from the community. It was accepted as part of the grouping, but not allowed to dominate it. Certainly it is important to keep hate in check, but perhaps one remedy is simply to do something else, to call on other perspectives from which to construe events. Hateful feelings can be accepted and can be transitory, as there are other voices that can be called upon. One feature of Kelly's therapeutic approach (and indeed, his approach to education generally), is that it is not necessary to give up what you are doing while you try out something new. The elaboration of new construing does not necessitate the immediate rejection of old.

One thing we might find in experimenting with new perspectives, is that we have forgiven the hated other. Halling's study (2008) indicated that forgiveness cannot be willed. It is no good trying to forgive someone. Like trying to sleep, there was often a paradoxical effect of preventing the desired result. His research participants often found that they had forgiven in retrospect. While not focusing on hate or resentment, the hatred had lost its edge. Sometimes participants found that their hatred vanished unexpectedly when they encountered the hated other. A new perspective of the other as vulnerable enabled them both to see the other differently and to accept their own sense of weakness. This finding echoes the experience of the English novelist George Orwell (1945/68). He had been a strong opponent of fascism in the 1930s and had enlisted in the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War. He had hated nazis and all that they stood for. But as a journalist in 1945, he visited an American prison camp in Germany and witnessed the cruelty meted out to captured SS officers. He found that he took no enjoyment from this, somewhat to his surprise, was disgusted by it.

The finding that we cannot effectively will forgiveness does not mean that it is unintentional. Halling (2008) argues that we do not forgive against our will. Again, to use the example of sleep, we cannot will it, but encourage it by putting ourselves in a position where it might come. So what we can do is put ourselves in a position to accept a change and be open to new possibilities. Too often, we 'nurse the grudge'. Kelly would term this elaboration through definition; finding ways of staying the same. Elaboration through extension is more difficult, requires more confidence and indeed, more courage. And this, once again, is Kelly's message about the Eden myth.

### **In Summary**

We have considered the classification of the psychology of personal constructs, emphasizing that categories should not be seen as immutable, but should be used and modified according to our needs. I have argued that it does not do justice to PCP to see it as a species of cognitivism. In many ways it resembles what has been termed a humanistic approach. It is certainly phenomenological, has strong similarities to existentialism and sees agency as a key feature of humankind. But there is no self, no spiritual centre of the person, one that acts like a gyroscope silently guiding the individual to fulfil his or her potential. From a constructivist perspective, there is no central command mechanism providing integrity to the person. Instead, the sense of



self is distributed but co-ordinated according to core role construing, leading to self as community as a better metaphor.

What difference does this make? I have taken the example of the experience of hatred, looking at the implications of this community of self approach. With a notion of a deeply rooted (probably largely unconscious) real self, hatred is seen as a fundamental feature of humankind. In individuals who are 'good haters', the roots of the hatred have necessarily to be confronted in order to bring about change. Challenge has been seen as the essential strategy. PCP accords no special place to any emotion. Drawing on studies in existential phenomenology, it is suggested that encouraging new ventures and even ignoring hatreds might provide a better strategy for change.

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